



Early Journal Content on JSTOR, Free to Anyone in the World

This article is one of nearly 500,000 scholarly works digitized and made freely available to everyone in the world by JSTOR.

Known as the Early Journal Content, this set of works include research articles, news, letters, and other writings published in more than 200 of the oldest leading academic journals. The works date from the mid-seventeenth to the early twentieth centuries.

We encourage people to read and share the Early Journal Content openly and to tell others that this resource exists. People may post this content online or redistribute in any way for non-commercial purposes.

Read more about Early Journal Content at <http://about.jstor.org/participate-jstor/individuals/early-journal-content>.

JSTOR is a digital library of academic journals, books, and primary source objects. JSTOR helps people discover, use, and build upon a wide range of content through a powerful research and teaching platform, and preserves this content for future generations. JSTOR is part of ITHAKA, a not-for-profit organization that also includes Ithaka S+R and Portico. For more information about JSTOR, please contact support@jstor.org.

GEORGE SAND: THE NEW LIFE.

BY HENRY JAMES.

THOSE among us comfortably conscious of our different usage—aware, some would say, of our better conscience—may well have remarked the general absence, in France, of biographic commemoration of extinct worthies. The *Life*, as we understand it, the prompt, pious, spacious record and mirror of the eminent career, rarely follows the death. The ghost of the great man, when he happens to have been a Frenchman, “sits” for such portraiture, we gather, with a confidence much less assured than among ourselves, and with fewer relatives and friends to surround the chair. The manner in which, even for persons of highest mark among our neighbors, biography either hangs back for years or altogether fails, suggests that the approach is, even if authorized, too often difficult. This general attitude toward the question, it would thus appear, implies the predominance, for such retrospects, of doors bolted and barred. Hesitation is, therefore, fairly logical; for it rests on the assumption that men and women of great gifts will have lived with commensurate intensity, and that as regards some of the forms of this intensity the discretion of the inquirer may well be the better part of his enthusiasm. The critic can, therefore, only note with regret so much absent opportunity for the play of perception and the art of composition. The race that produced Balzac—to say nothing of Sainte-Beuve—would surely have produced a Boswell, a Lockhart and a Trevelyan if the fashion had not set so strongly against it. We have lately had a capital example of the encounter of an admirable English painter and an admirable English subject. It is not irrelevant to cite such a book as Mr. Mackail’s *Life of William Morris* as our high-water mark—a thing extremely to rejoice in. Each term of the combination appears supposable in France, but

only as distinct from the other. The artist, we gather, would there have lost his chance and the sinner his ease.

It completes in an interesting way these observations, which would bear much expansion, to perceive that when we at last have a Life of Madame George Sand—a celebrity living with the imputed intensity, if ever a celebrity did—we are indebted for it to the hand of a stranger. No fact could more exactly point the moral of my few remarks. Madame Sand's genius and renown would have long ago made her a subject at home, if alacrity, in such a connection, had been to be dreamed of. There is no more significant sign of the general ban under which alacrity rests. Everything about this extraordinary woman is interesting, and we can easily imagine the posthumous honors we ourselves would have hastened to assure to a part taken, in literature and life, with such brilliancy and sincerity. These demonstrations, where we should most look for them, have been, none the less, as naught—save indeed, to be exact, for the publication of a number of volumes of letters. It is just Madame Sand's letters, however—letters interesting and admirable, peculiarly qualified to dispose the reader in her favor—that, in England or in America, would have quickened the need for the rest of the evidence. But now that, as befalls, we do at last have the rest of the evidence as we never have had it before, we are of course sufficiently enlightened as to the reasons for a special application of the law of reserves and delays. It is not in fact easy to see how a full study of our heroine could have been produced earlier; and, even at present, there is a sensible comfort in its being produced at such a distance as practically imputes the act to a detached posterity. Contemporaneously, it was wise to forbear; but to-day, and in Russia, by good luck, it is permitted to plunge.

Mme. Wladimir Karénine's extraordinarily diffuse, but scarcely less valuable, biography, of which the first instalment,* in two large volumes, brings the story but to the year 1838, reaches us in a French version, apparently from the author's own hand, of chapters patiently contributed to Russian periodicals. Were it not superficially ungrateful to begin with reserves about a book so rich and full, there might be some complaint to make of this wonderful tribute on grounds of form and taste. Ponderous and prolix, the author moves in a mass, escorted by all the penalties

* "*George Sand, sa Vie et ses Œuvres. 1804-1876.*" Paris, 1899.

of her indifference to selection and compression. She insists and repeats, she wanders wide; her subject spreads about her, in places, as rather a pathless waste. Above all, she has produced a book which manages to be at once remarkably expert and singularly provincial. Our innocence is, perhaps, at fault, but we are moved to take the mixture as characteristically Russian. Would, indeed, any but that admirable "Slav" superiority to prejudice, of which we have lately heard so much, have availed to handle the particular facts in this large, free way? Nothing is, at all events, more curious than the union, on the part of our biographer, of psychological intelligence and a lame æsthetic. The writer's literary appreciations lag, in other words, half a century behind her human and social. She treats us to endless disquisitions on pages of her author to which we are no longer in any manageable relation at all—disquisitions pathetic, almost grotesque, in their misplaced good faith. But her attitude to her subject is admirable, her thoroughness exemplary, the spirit of service in her of the sort that builds the monument stone by stone. When we see it reared to the summit, as we are clearly to do, we shall feel the structure to be solid if not shapely. Nothing is more possible, meanwhile, than that a culture more homogeneous—a French hand or a German—could not have engaged in the work with anything like the same sincerity. An English hand—and the fact, for *our* culture, means much—would have been incapable of touching it. The present scale of it, at all events, is certainly an exotic misconception. But we can take of it what concerns us.

The whole thing, of course, we promptly reflect, concerns at the best only those of us who can remount a little the stream of time. The author of "*L'Histoire de ma Vie*" died in 1876, and the light of actuality, to-day, rests on very different heads. It may seem to belittle her to say that to care for her at all one must have cared for her from far back, for such is not in general the proviso we need to make on behalf of the greatest figures. It describes Madame Sand with breadth, but not with extravagance, to speak of her as a sister of Goethe, and we feel that for Goethe it can never be too late to care. But the case exemplifies, perhaps precisely, the difference, even in the most brilliant families, between sisters and brothers. She was to have the family spirit, but she was to receive from the fairies who attended at her cradle

the silver cup, not the gold. She was to write a hundred books, but she was not to write "Faust." She was to have all the distinction, but not all the perfection; and there could be no better instance of the degree in which a woman may achieve the one and still fail of the other. When it is a question of the rare originals who have either, she confirms us, masculine as she is, in believing that it takes a still greater masculinity to have both. What she had, however, she had in profusion; she was one of the deepest voices of that great mid-century concert against the last fine strains of which we are more and more banging the doors. Her work, beautiful, plentiful, and fluid, has floated itself out to sea, even as the melting snows of the high places are floated. To feel how she has passed away as a "creator," is to feel anew the immense waste involved in the general ferment of an age, and how much genius and beauty, let alone the baser parts of the mixture, it takes to produce a moderate quantity of literature. Smaller people have conceivably ceased to count; but it is strange for a member of the generation immediately succeeding her own that she should have had the same fate as smaller people: all the more that such a mourner may be ruefully conscious of contributing not a little himself to the mishap. Does he still read, re-read, can he to-day at all deal with, this wonderful lady's novels? It only half cheers him up that, on the occasion of such a publication as I here speak of, he finds himself as much interested as ever.

The grounds of the interest are difficult to give; they presuppose so much of the old impression. If the old impression, therefore, requires some art to sustain and justify itself, we must be content, so far as we are still under the charm, to pass, though only at the worst, for eccentric. The work, whether we still hold fast to it or not, has twenty qualities, and would still have an immense one if it had only its style; but what I suppose it has paid for it in the long-run is its want of plastic intensity. Does any work of representation, of imitation, live long that is predominantly loose? It may live in spite of looseness; but that, we make out, is only because closeness has somewhere, where it has most mattered, prevailed. It is hard to say of Madame Sand's productions, I think, that they show closeness anywhere; the sense of fluidity is what, in speaking of them, constantly comes back to us, and the sense of fluidity is fundamentally fatal to the

sense of particular truth. A picture is never the stream of the artist's inspiration; it is the deposit of the stream. For the picture, in George Sand, we must look elsewhere, look at her life and her nature, and find them in the copious documents in which these things, and many others, are now reflected. All *this* mass of evidence it is that constitutes the "intensity" we demand. The mass has little by little become large, and our obligation to Mme. Karénine is that she makes it still larger. She sets our faces, and without intending to, more and more in the right direction. Her injudicious analyses of forgotten fictions only confirm our discrimination. We feel ourselves in the presence of the extraordinary author of them, and yet also feel it to be not by reason of them that she now presents herself as one of the most remarkable of human creatures. By reason then of what? Of everything that determined, accompanied, surrounded their appearance. They formed, all together, a great feature in a career and a character, but the career and the character are the real thing.

Such is far from usually the case, I hasten to recognize, with the complete and genuine artist. Poor is the art, a thing positively to be ashamed of, that, generally speaking, is not far more real for this servant of the altar than anything else, anything outside the church, can possibly be. To have been the tempered and directed hammer that makes the metal hard: if that be not good enough for such a ministrant, we may know him by whatever he has found better—we shall not know him by the great name. The immense anomaly of Madame Sand was that she freely took the form of being, with most zest, quite another sort of hammer. It testifies sufficiently to her large endowment that, given the wide range of the rest of her appetite, she should seem to us to-day to have sacrificed, even superficially, to *any* form of objective expression. She had, in spite of herself, an imagination almost of the first order, which overflowed and irrigated, turning by its mere swift current, without effort, almost without direction, every mill it encountered, and launching, as it went, alike the lightest skiff and the stateliest ship. She had, in especial, the gift of speech, speech supreme and inspired, to which we particularly owe the high value of the "case" she presents. For the case was, definitely, a bold and direct experiment, not at all in "art," not at all in literature, but conspicuously and repeatedly

in life; so that our profit of it is, before anything else, that it was conscious, articulate, vivid—recorded, reflected, imaged. The subject of the experiment became, also, at first hand, the journalist, much of her work being simply splendid journalism—commissioned to bring it up to date. She interviewed nobody else, but she admirably interviewed herself; and this is exactly our good fortune. Her autobiography, her letters, her innumerable prefaces, all her expansive parentheses and excursions, compose the generous report. We have in this form, accordingly, to my sense, a literary title for her far superseding any derived from her creative work. But that is the result of a mere betrayal, not the result of an intention. Her masterpiece, by a perversity of fate, is the thing she least sat down to. It is, since she is a case, the mere notation of her symptoms, the aid to the study of them. To this has the author of "*Consuelo*" come.

But how in the world, indeed, was it *not* to be the particular cross-road at which the critic should lie in wait for a poor child of the age, whom preceding ages and generations had so almost infernally conspired to trap for him, to give up, candidly astray, to his hands? If the element of romance for which our heroine's name stands is best represented by her personal sequences and solutions, it is sufficiently visible that her heredity left her a scant alternative. Space fails me for the story of this heredity, queer and complicated, the very stuff that stories are made of—a chain of generations succeeding each other in confidence and joy, and with no aid asked of legal or other artificial sanctions. The facts are, moreover, sufficiently familiar, though here, as elsewhere, Mme. Karénine adds to our knowledge. Presented, foreshortened, stretching back from the quiet Nohant funeral of 1876 to the steps of the throne of King Augustus the Strong of Poland, father of Maurice de Saxe, great-great-grandfather of Aurore Dupin, it all hangs together as a group of *data* more provocative than any the great novelist herself ever handled. Her pre-natal past was so peopled with *dramatis personae* that her future had to supply them in such numbers as would preserve the balance. The tide of illegitimacy sets straight through the series. No one to speak of—Aurore's father is an exception—seems to have had a conventional paternity. Aurore herself squared with the convention but by a month or two; the marriage of her parents gave her a bare escape. She was brought up, by

her paternal grandmother, between a son of her father and a daughter of her mother born out of wedlock. It all moves before us as a vivid younger world, a world, on the whole, more amused and more amusing than ours. The period from the Restoration to the events of 1848 is the stretch of time in which, for more reasons than we can now go into, French life gives out, to those to whom its appeal never fails, most of its charm—most, at all events, of its ancient sociability. Happy is our sense of the picturesque Paris unconscious of a future, all “avenues” and exhibitions; happy is our sense of these middle years of a great generation, easy and lusty, despite the ensanguined spring that had gone before. They live again, piecing themselves ever so pleasantly and strangely together, in Madame Sand’s records and references; almost as much as the conscious close of the old *régime*, so vaunted by Talleyrand, they strike us as a season of which it would have been supremely good to taste.

They were, at any rate, unable to withhold from the wonderful young person growing up at Nohant the conditions she was so imperiously to require for tasting in her own manner. Though the motto of her autobiography is “*Wahrheit und Dichtung*,” quite as much as it had been that of Goethe’s, there is a truth beyond any projected by her professed fables in her evocation of the influences of her youth. Upon these influences Mme. Karénine, who has enjoyed access, through her heroine’s actual representatives, to much evidence hitherto unpublished, throws a hundred interesting lights. Mme. Dupin de Franceuil and Mme. Dupin the younger survive and perform for us, “convince” us, as we say, better than any Lélia or any Consuelo. Our author’s whole treatment of her remarkable mother’s figure and history conveniently gives the critic the pitch of the great fact about her—the formation, apparently at a given moment, yet in very fact, we may be sure, from far back, of the capacity and the determination to live, with high consistency, for herself. What she made of this resolve to allow her nature all its chances, and how she carried on the process—these things are, thanks to the immense illustration her genius enabled her to lend them, the essence of her story; of which the full adumbration is in the detached pictorial way she causes her mother to live for us. Motherhood, daughterhood, childhood, embarrassed maturity, were phenomena she early encountered in her great adventure, and nothing is more typical

of her energy and sincerity than the short work that we can scarce help feeling she makes of them. It is not that she for a moment blinks or dodges them; she weaves them straight in—embarks with them, indeed, as her principal baggage. We know to-day, from the pages before us, everything we need to know about her marriage and the troubled years that followed; about M. Casimir Dudevant and his possible points of view, about her separation, her sharp secession, rather, as it first presents itself, and her discovery, at a turn of the road, as it can only be called, of her genius.

She stumbled on this principle, we see, quite by accident, as a consequence of the attempt to do the very humblest labor, to support herself from day to day. It would be difficult to put one's finger more exactly upon a case of genius unaided and unprompted. She embarked, as I have called it, on her great voyage with no grounds of confidence whatever; she had, obscurely, unwittingly, the spirit of Columbus, but not so much even as his exiguous outfit. She found her gift of improvisation, found her tropic wealth, by leaping—a surprised *conquistador* of "style"—straight upon the coral strand. No awakened instinct, probably, was ever such a blessing to a writer so much in need. It was for a long time all her initiation, practically all her equipment. The curious thing is that she never really arrived at it at all, but that she started with it, as a Patti or a Mario starts with a voice, and that it was simply the train in which she travelled. It was to render her as great a service as any supreme faculty ever rendered its possessor, quite the same service as the strategic eye renders a commander in the field, or instant courage the attacking soldier: it was to carry her through life still more inimitably than through the career of authorship. Her books are all rich and resonant with it, but they profit by it meagrely compared with her character. She walks, from first to last, in music of her own making, and it is in truth, sometimes only, with her present biographer to elbow us a little the way, that these triumphant sounds permit us a near enough approach to the procession to make out quite exactly its course.

No part of her career is, to my sense, so curious as this particular sudden bound into the arena. Nothing but the indescribable heredity I have spoken of appears traceably to have prepared it. We have on one side the mere poverty and provincial-

ity of her marriage and her early contacts, the crudity of her youth and her ignorance (which included so small a view of herself that she had begun by looking for a future in the bedaubing, for fancy-shops, of little boxes and fans); and on the other, at a stride, the full-blown distinction of "*Valentine*" and "*Jacques*," which had had nothing to lead up to it, we seem to make out, but the very rough sketch of a love-affair with M. Jules Sandeau. I spoke just now of the possible points of view of poor M. Dudevant; at which, had we space, it might be of no small amusement to glance—of an amusement, indeed, large and suggestive. We see him, surely, in the light of these records, as the most "sold" husband in literature, and not at all, one feels, by his wife's assertion of her freedom, but simply by her assertion of her mind. He appears to have married her for a nobody, approved and guaranteed, and he found her, on his hands, a sister, as we have seen, of Goethe—unless it be but a figure to say that he ever "found" her anything. He appears to have lived to an advanced age without having really—in spite of the lawsuits he lost—comprehended his case; not the least singular feature of which had in fact positively been the deceptive delay of his fate. It was not till after several years of false calm that it presented itself in its special form. We see him, and his so ruthlessly superseded name, never to be gilded by the brilliant event, reduced, like a leaf in a whirlwind, to a mere vanishing-point.

We deal here, I think, with something very different from the usual tittle-tattle about "private" relations, for the simple reason that we deal with relations foredoomed to publicity by the strange economy involved in the very play of genius. Nothing was ever less wasted, from beginning to end, than all this amorous experience and all this luxury of woe. The parties to it were to make an inveterate use of it, the principal party most of all; and what, therefore, on that marked ground, concerns the critic is to see what they were appreciably to get out of it. The principal party, the constant one through all mutations, was alone qualified to produce the extract that affects us as final. It was by the publication four years since of her letters to Alfred de Musset and to Sainte-Beuve—by the appearance also of Mme. Arvède Barine's luminous little *Life of Musset*—that we began to find her personal history brought nearer to us than her own communications had, in her lifetime, already brought it. The

story of her relations with Musset is, accordingly, so known that I need only glance at the fact of her having—shortly after the highest degree of intimacy between them had, in the summer of 1833, established itself in Paris—travelled with him to Italy, settled with him, briefly, in Venice, and there passionately quarrelled and parted with him—only, however, several months later, on their return to France, to renew again, to quarrel and to part again, all more passionately, if possible, even than before. Mme. Karénine, besides supplying us with all added light on this episode, keeps us abreast of others that were to follow, leaves us no more in the dark about Michel de Bourges, Félicien Mallefille, and Chopin than we had already been left about their several predecessors. She is commendably lucid on the subject of Franz Liszt, impartially examines the case and authoritatively dismisses it. Her second volume brings her heroine to the eve of the historic departure with Chopin for Majorca. We have thus, in this convenient form, enough for one mouthful of entertainment, as well as for superabundant reflection.

We have indeed the whole essence of what most touches us, for this consists not at all of the quantity of the facts, nor even of their oddity: they are practically all there from the moment the heroine's general attitude defines itself. This is the solid element—the details, to-day, are smoke. Yet it was in particular in taking her place, that autumn evening, in the southward-moving diligence that Alfred de Musset—it was on this special occasion, I hasten to add, that she gave most the measure of her choice of the logical life. She had reached toward such a life, obviously in quitting the conjugal roof in 1831—had attacked the experiment clumsily, but according to her light, by throwing herself on such material support as faculties yet untested might furnish, and on such moral as several months of the *intimité* of Jules Sandeau and a briefer taste of that of Prosper Mérimée might further contribute. She had done, in other words, what she could; subsequent lights show it as not her fault that she had not done better. With Musset her future took a stride; emotionally it “looked up.” Nothing was wanting, in this case—independently of what might then have appeared her friend's equal genius—quite ideally to qualify it. He was several years her junior, and as she had her husband and her children, he had, in the high degree of most young Frenchmen of

sensibility, his mother. It is recorded that with this lady, on the eve of the celebrated step, she quite had the situation, as the phrase is, out; which is a note the more in the general intellectual lucidity. The only other note, in fact, to be added is that of the absence of funds for the undertaking. Neither partner had a penny to spare; the plan was wholly to "make money," as it were, as they went. A great deal was, in the event, to tell the truth, to be made—but the event was at the time far from clear to them. The enterprise was, in consequence, purely and simply, with a rounded perfection that gives it its value for the critic, an affair of the heart. That the heart, speaking of it as a fully representative organ, should fail of no good occasion completely and consistently to engage itself was the definite and, as appeared, the promising assumption on which everything rested. The heart was real life, frank, fearless, intelligent, and even, so far as might be, intelligible, life; everything else was stupid as well as poor, muddle as well as misery. The heart, of course, might be misery, for nothing was more possible than that life predominantly was; but it was, at all events, the misery that is least ignoble.

This was the basis of Madame Sand's personal evolution, of her immense moral energy, for many a year; it was a practical system, applied and reapplied, and no "inquiry" concerning her has much point save as settling what, for our enlightenment and our esteem, she made of it. The answer meets us, I think, after we have taken in the facts, promptly enough, and with great clearness, if we consider that it is not, that it cannot be, in the conditions, a simple one. She made of it then, intellectually, a splendid living, but she was able to do this only because she was an altogether exceptional example of human stuff. It is here that her famous heredity comes in: we see what a race accumulation of "toughness" had been required to build her up. Monstrous monarchs and bastards of kings, bastards of bastards, courtesans, dancers supple and hard, accomplished men and women of the old, dead, great world, seasoned young soldiers of the Imperial epic, grisettes of the *pavé de Paris*, Parisian to the core—the mixture was not quite the blood of people in general, and, obviously, such a final flower of such a stem might well have fixed the attention and appealed to the vigilance of those qualified to watch its development. These persons would, doubtless, however, as a result of their observation, have acquired betimes a sense of the

high vitality of their young friend. Formed essentially for independence, and constructed for resistance and survival, she was to be trusted, as I have hinted, to take care of herself: this was always the residuary fact, whenever a passion was spent. She took care of Musset, she took care of Chopin, took care, in short, in her career, of a whole series of nurslings, but never failed, through the worst ingratitude, to be, by her own elasticity, still better taken care of. This is why we call her anomalous and deprecate any view of her success that loses sight of the anomaly. The success was so great that, but *for* the remainder, she would be too encouraging. She was one in a million, and the cluster of circumstances is too unlikely to recur.

It is by her success, none the less, we must also remember, that we know her; it is this that makes her interesting and calls for study. She had all the illumination that sensibility, that curiosity, can give, and that so ingeniously induces surrender to it; but the too numerous weaknesses, vulgarities and penalties of adventure and surrender she had only in sufficient degree to complete the experience before they shaped themselves into the eloquence into which she could always reascend. Her eloquence—it is the simplest way to explain her—fairly *made* her success; and eloquence is superlatively rare. When passion can always depend upon it to vibrate, passion becomes to that extent action, and success is nothing but action repeated and confirmed. In Madame Sand's particular case, the constant recurrence of the malady of passion promoted, in the most extraordinary way, the superior appearance, the general expression, of health. It is not, of course, to be denied that there are, in her works, infirmities and disfigurements, odd smutches even, or unwitting drolleries, which show a sense on some sides enfeebled. The sense of her characters themselves, for instance, is constantly a confused one; they are too often at sea as to what is possible and what impossible for what we roughly call decent people. Her own categories, loose and liberal, are yet, naturally, never rough; when they sin it is by excess of indulgence and absence of the humorous vision, a nose for the ridiculous—the fatal want, this last almost always, we are reminded, the heel of Achilles, in the sentimental, the romantic estimate. The general solidity of her novels, at any rate, I leave impugned, and the feature I have just noted in them is but one of the points at which they fail of reality. I stick to

the history of her personal experiment, as the now so numerous documents show it; for it is here, and here only, that her felicity is amusing and confounding; amusing by the quaintness of some of the facts exposed, and yet confounding by reason of the beauty mixed with them.

The "affair" with Musset, for instance, has come to figure, thanks to the talent of both parties, as one of the great affairs in the history of letters; and yet, on the near view of it that we now enjoy, we learn that it lasted but little more than a year. Even this measure, indeed, is excessive, so far as any measure serves amid so much that is incoherent. It supposed itself to have dropped, for upwards of six months, during which another connection, another imperious heart-history, reigned in its stead. The enumeration of these trifles is not, I insist, futile; so that, while we are about it, we shall find an interest in being clear. The events of Venice, with those that immediately preceded and followed them, distinctly repay inspection as an epitome, in their totality, of the usual process. They appear to contain, as well as an intensity all their own, the essence of all that of other occasions. The young poet and the young novelist met, then, appear to have met for the first time, toward the end of June, 1833, and to have become finally intimate in the month of August of that year. They started together for Italy at the beginning of the winter, and were settled—if settled be not too odd a word to use—by the end of January in Venice. I neglect the question of Musset's serious illness there, though it be not the least renowned part of the adventure, and observe simply that by the end of March he had started to return to Paris, while his friend, remaining in Venice, had yielded to a new affection. This new affection, the connection with Pietro Pagello, dates, unmistakably, from before Musset's departure; and, with the completion of "*Jacques*" and the composition of the beautiful "*André*," the wonderful "*Léone-Léoni*" and some of the most interesting of the "*Lettres d'un Voyageur*," constituted the main interest of our heroine during the spring and early summer. By midsummer, she had left Italy with Pagello, and they arrive in Paris on August 14th. This arrival marks immediately the term of their relations, which had by that time lasted some six or seven months. Pagello returned to Italy, and if they ever met again it was the merest of meetings and long years afterwards.

In October, meanwhile, the connection with Musset was renewed, and renewed—this is the great point—because the sentiments still entertained by each (in spite of Pagello, in spite of everything) are stronger even than any awkwardness of which either might have been conscious. The whole business, really, is one in which we lose our measure alike of awkwardness and of grace. The situation is in the hands of comedy—or *would* be, I should rather say, were it not so distinctly predestined to fall, as I have noted, into those of eloquence. It is prolonged till the following February, we make out, at furthest, and only after having been, more than once in the interval, threatened with violent extinction. It bequeathes us thus, in a handful of dates, a picture than which none other, probably, in the annals of “passion” was ever more suggestive. The passion is of the kind that is called “immortal”—and so called, wonderful to say, with infinite reason and justice. The poems, the letters, the diaries, the novels, the unextinguished accents and lingering echoes that commemorate it are among the treasures of the human imagination. The literature of the world is appreciably the richer for it. Eloquence, in a word, on both sides, marked it for her own; it was born, according to the adage, with a silver spoon in its mouth. It was an affection, in short, transcendent and sublime, and yet the critic sees it come and go before he can positively turn round. The brief period of some seventeen or eighteen months not only affords it all its opportunity, but lodges comfortably in its lap a relation founded on the same elements and yet wholly distinct from it. Musset occupied, in fact, but two-thirds of the time. Pagello overlapped him because Pagello also appealed to the heart; but Pagello’s appeal to the heart was disposed of as expeditiously. Musset, in the same way, succeeded Pagello at the voice of a similar appeal, and this claim, in its turn, was polished off in yet livelier fashion.

Liveliness is, of course, the tune of the “gay” career; it has always been supposed to relegate to comedy the things to which it puts its mark—so that, as a series of sequences amenable mainly to satire, the approximations I have made would fall neatly into place. The anomaly here, as on other occasions of the same sort depicted in Mme. Karénine’s volumes, is that the facts, as we are brought near to them, strike us as so out of relation to the beautiful tone. The effect and the achieved dignity are those

of tragedy—tragedy rearranging, begetting afresh, in its own interest, all the elements of ecstasy and despair. How can it not be tragedy when this interest is just the interest, which I have touched on, of exemplary eloquence? There are lights in which the material, with its want of nobleness, want of temper, want even of manners, seems scarcely life at all, as the civilized conscience understands life; and yet it is as the most magnanimous of surrenders to life that the whole business is, in the documents, triumphantly reflected. It is not only that "*La Nuit d'Octobre*" is divine, that Madame Sand's letters are superb and that nothing can exceed, in particular, the high style of the passage that we now perceive Musset to have borrowed from one of them for insertion in "*On ne Badine pas avec l'Amour*"—to the extreme profit of the generation which was, for many years thereafter, to hear Delaunay exquisitely declaim at the Théâtre Français: it is that, strange to say, almost the finest flower of the bouquet is the now-famous written "declaration" addressed to Pagello one evening by the lady. Musset was ill in bed; he was the attendant doctor; and while, watching and ignorant of French, he twirled his thumbs or dipped into a book, his patient's companion, on the other side of the table and with the lamp between them, dashed off (it took time) a specimen of her finest prose, which she then folded and handed to him, and which, for perusal more at leisure, he carried off in his pocket. It proved neither more nor less than one of the pontoon bridges which a force engaged in an active campaign holds itself ready at any time to throw across a river, and was in fact, in its kind, a solid and beautiful structure. It happily spanned, at all events, the gulf of a short acquaintance.

The incident bears a family resemblance to another which our biographer finds in her path in the year 1837. Having to chronicle the close of the relation with Michel de Bourges, from which, again, her heroine had so much to suffer, she has also to mention that this catastrophe was precipitated, to all appearance, by the contemporaneous dawn of an affection "*plus douce, moins enthusiaste, moins âpre aussi, et j'espère plus durable.*" The object of this affection was none other than the young man then installed at Nohant as preceptor to Madame Sand's children—but as to whom, in the event, we ask ourselves what, by this time, her notion of measure or durability can have become. It is just

this element that has positively least to do, we seem to make out, with "affection" as so practised. Affection, in any sense worth speaking of, is durability; and it is the repeated impermanence of those manifestations of it on behalf of which the high horse of "passion" is ridden so hard, that makes us wonder whether such loves and such licenses, in spite of the quality of free experience they represent, had really anything to do with it. It was the last thing, verily, they contained. Félicien Mallefille may be, to his heart's content, of 1837 and even of a portion of 1838; it is Chopin who is of the rest of the year and—let us hope our biographer will have occasion to show us—of at least the whole of the following. It is here that, as I have mentioned, she pauses.

One of the most interesting contributions to her subject is the long letter from Balzac to his future wife, Mme. Hanska, now reproduced in the most substantial of the few volumes of his correspondence ("*Lettres à l'Étrangère, 1833-1842*," published 1899) and printed by Mme. Karénine. The author, finding himself near Nohant in the spring of 1838, went over to pay his illustrious colleague a visit, and spent a day or two in sustained conversation with her. He had the good fortune to find her alone, so that they could endlessly talk and smoke by the fire, and nothing can be all at once more vivid, more curious and more judicious than his immediate report of the occasion. It lets into the whole question of his hostess's character and relations—inevitably more or less misrepresented by the party most involved—air and light and truth; it re-establishes the proportions. It shows these things as confronted, in a word, with Balzac's huge sense of the real, and offers the grateful critic still another chance to testify for that precious gift. This same critic's mind rests, it must be added, with complacency on the vision, thus evoked, of the way that, for three days, from five o'clock in the afternoon till five in the morning, the wonderful friends must have had things out. For once, we feel sure, fundamental questions were not shirked. As regards his comrade, at any rate, Balzac puts his finger again and again on the truth and the idiosyncrasy. "She is not *aimable*, and, in consequence, will always find it difficult to be loved." He adds—and it is here that he comes nearest straightening the question—that she has, in character, all the leading marks of a man, is as little as possible

a woman. He implies that, though judged as a woman she may be puzzling enough, she hangs together perfectly if judged as a man. She is a man, he repeats, "and all the more that she wants to be, that she has sunk the woman, that she isn't one. Women attract, and she repels; and, as I am much of a man, if this is the effect she produces on me she must produce it on men who are like me—so that she will always be unhappy." He qualifies as justly, I may parenthesize, her artistic side, the limits of which, he moreover intimates, she had herself expressed to him. "She has neither intensity of conception, nor the constructive gift, nor the faculty of reaching the truth"—Balzac's own deep dye of the truth—"nor the art of the pathetic. But she holds that, without knowing the French language, she has *style*. And it's true."

The light of mere evidence, the light of such researches as Mme. Karénine's, added to her so copious correspondence and autobiography, makes Madame Sand so much of a riddle that we grasp at Balzac's authoritative word as at an approach to a solution. It is, strange to say, by reading another complexity into her image that we finally simplify it. The riddle consists in the irreconcilability of her distinction and her vulgarity. Vulgar, somehow, in spite of everything, is the record of so much taking and tasting and leaving, so much publicity and palpability of "heart," so much experience reduced only to the terms of so many more or less greasy males. And not only vulgar, but, in a manner, grotesque—from the moment, that is, that the experience is presented to us, in any degree, in the name of terror and pity. It was not a passive, but an active, situation, that of a nature robust and not too fastidious, full, at all times, of resistance and recovery. No history gives us really more ground to protest against the new fashion, rife in France, of transporting "love," as there mainly represented, to the air of morals and of melancholy. The fashion betrays only the need to rejuvenate, at a considerable cost of falsity, an element in connection with which levity is felt either to have exhausted itself or to look thin as a motive. It is in the light of levity that many of the facts presented by Mme. Karénine are most intelligible, and that is the circumstance awkward for sensibility and for all the graces it is invited to shed.

The scene quite changes when we cease to expect these graces. As a man Madame Sand was admirable—especially as a man of

the dressing-gown and slippers order, easy of approach and of *tutoiement*, rubbing shoulders with queer company and not superstitiously haunted by the conception of the gentleman. There have been many men of genius, delightful, prodigal, and even immortal, who squared but scantily with that conception, and it is a company to which our heroine is simply one of the most interesting of recruits. She has in it all her value and loses none of her charm. Above all, she becomes in a manner comprehensible, as any frank Bohemian is comprehensible. We have only to imagine the Bohemian really endowed, the Bohemian, that is, both industrious and wise, to get almost all her formula. She keeps, here and there, a feminine streak—has at moments an excess of volubility and too great an insistence on having been in the right; but, for the rest, as Balzac says, the character, confronted with the position, is an explanation. "*Son mâle*," he writes to Mme. Hanska, "*était rare*"—than which nothing could have been more natural. Yet for this masculine counterpart—so difficult to find—she ingenuously spent much of her early life in looking. That the search was a mistake is what constitutes, in all the business of which the Musset episode is the type, the only, the real melancholy, the real moral tragedy.

For all such mistakes, none the less, the whole lesson of the picture is precisely in the disconcerting success of her system. Everything was, at the start, against that presumption; but everything, at the end, was to indicate that she was not to have been beaten. Others might well have been, and the banks of the stream of her career are marked, not invisibly, with mouldering traces of the less lucky or the less buoyant; but her attitude, as life went on, was more and more that of showing how she profited of all things for wisdom and sympathy, for a general expertness and nobleness. These forces, all clarified to an admirable judgment, kept her, to the last day, serene and superior, and they are one of the reasons why the monument before us is felt not to be misplaced. There should always be a monument to those whose *tour de force* has been great. What greater *tour de force* than to have bequeathed in such mixed elements, to have principally made up of them, the affirmation of an unprecedented intensity of life? For though this intensity was one that broke down, in each proposed exhibition, the general example remains, incongruously, almost the best we can cite. And all we can say is

that this brings us back once more to the greatness, the exceptional energy and wellnigh monstrous vitality, of the individual concerned. Nothing is so absurd as a half-disguise, and Madame Sand's abiding value will probably be in her having given her sex, for its new evolution and transformation, the real standard and measure of change. This evolution, this transformation, all round us, is unmistakable; the change is in the air; women are turned more and more to looking at life as men look at it and to getting from it what men get. In this direction their aim has been, as yet, comparatively modest and their emulation low; the challenge they have hitherto picked up is but the challenge of the "average" male. The approximation of the extraordinary woman has been practically, in other words, to the ordinary man. Madame Sand's service is that she planted the flag much higher: her own approximation, at least, was to the extraordinary. She reached him, she surpassed him, and she showed how, with native dispositions, the thing could be done. These new records will live as the precious text-book, so far as we have got, of the business.

HENRY JAMES.